

Tobelo language

Tobelo (Indonesian: *bahasa Tobelo*) is a North Halmahera language spoken on the eastern Indonesian island of Halmahera and on parts of several neighboring islands. The Tobelo-speaking heartland is in the district (Indonesian: *kecamatan*) of Tobelo, located on the western shore of Kao Bay. The district capital, also known as Tobelo, serves as a regional commercial and administrative center and is the largest settlement on Halmahera.

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Dialects

Six principal dialects are generally recognized (Voorhoeve 1988):

- Heleworuru
- Boeng
- Dodinga
- Lake Paca
- Kukumutuk
- Popon

The last three dialects are also known as "Tugutil". The Tugutil or "Forest Tobelo" varieties may include additional dialectal variants, but this has not been satisfactorily documented (Voorhoeve 1988). Intelligibility is not great (Ethnologue).

In addition, based on cognition percentages in a basic vocabulary list, Voorhoeve 1988 identifies five other North Halmaheran language varieties as dialects of the putative Northeast Halmaheran language. Together with Tobelo, these varieties are Galela, Loloda, Modole, Pagu and Tabaru. Most speakers consider these to be distinct languages from Tobelo, although they do acknowledge a certain degree of mutual intelligibility.

Phonology

Tobelo	
Native to	Indonesia
Region	North Halmahera
Native speakers	30,000 (2000) ^[1]
Language family	West Papuan - North Halmahera - Galela–Tobelo Tobelo
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Either: t1b – Tobelo tuj – Tugutil
Glottolog	tobe1251 (http://glottolog.org/resource/language/id/tobe1251) ^[2]
	
The Tobelo speaking region (grey) on Halmahera	

Consonants

	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Plosive</u>	p b	t d		k g	
<u>Fricative</u>	(f)		ɕ		h
<u>Affricate</u>			(tʃ) dʒ		
<u>Nasal</u>	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
<u>Lateral</u>		l	ʎ		
<u>Rhotic</u>		r			
<u>Approximant</u>	w		(j)		

Consonant sounds in parentheses only occur in loan words or in other Tobelo dialects.

Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Mid	e~ɛ		o
Open		a	

Mid front vowels can range from /e/ to /ɛ/.^[3]

Directionals

Most all of the 50 languages of Maluku have some sort of directional system. At the least the up/down distinction seems to be an areal feature. But this brings up the chicken and the egg phenomenon. Is this directional system of AN or NAN origin? Or is it a mixture?

Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the Tobelo are the most widespread ethnic group in Maluku, with sizable emigrant population throughout the province. We can at least be sure that the Malay directionals are the "egg", because Malay as spoken in Western Indonesia does not use these directionals whereas Moluccan Malay uses direct calques of the Tobelo terms:

bawah, atas, darat, laut.

Tobelo directionals are described in Taylor (1984). Tobelo directional adverbs occur:

1. on motion verbs to specify direction of motion
2. on nouns to specify motion away from or toward an object

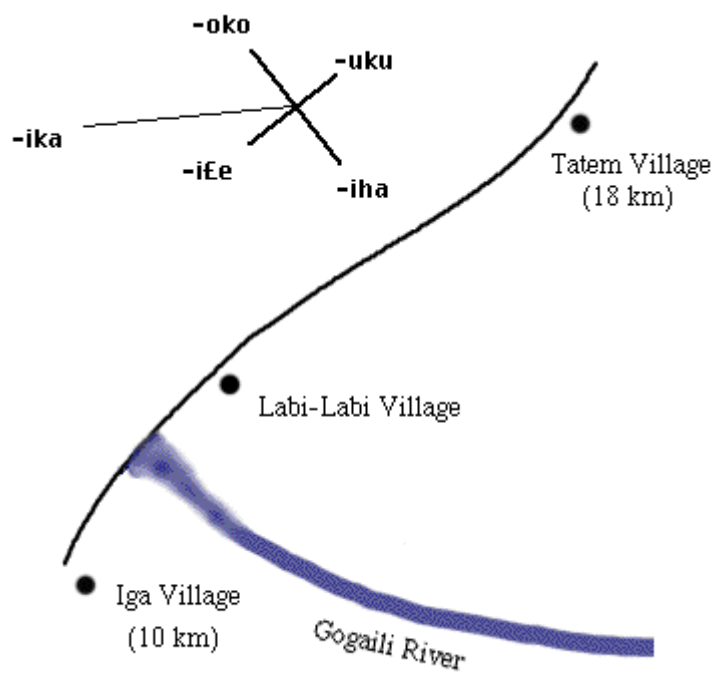
Thus, interpretation of directional adverbs is entirely context-dependent. For example,

o tau t-oiki
NM house 1AGT-go
'I'm going to the house'

If I meet you landwards of the house, this means that I'm headed inland from my house. If I meet you seawards of the house, then it means I'm headed inland to the house.

Some Tobelo
directionals

Deictic	Adverb	
land	dina	-iha
sea	dai	-oko
up	daku	-ilye
down	dau	-uku
over	doka	-ika



References

1. Tobelo (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/tlb/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
Tugutil (<https://www.ethnologue.com/18/language/tuj/>) at *Ethnologue* (18th ed., 2015)
2. Hammarström, Harald; Forkel, Robert; Haspelmath, Martin, eds. (2017). "Tobelo–Tugutil" (<http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/tobe1251>). *Glottolog 3.0*. Jena, Germany: Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History.
3. Holton, Gary (2003). *Tobelo*.

External links

- Tobelo Bible App (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tobelo.maluku.alkitab&hl=de>)

Further reading

- Holton, Gary. 2003. Tobelo. (Languages of the World/Materials 328). Munich: LINCOM Europa. ISBN 3-89586-706-3
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